ACM HELPS PHILLY SCHOOL

The Villanova Chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery visited Julia de Burgos Elementary School in Philadelphia on Saturday, March 29th. They were greeted upon their arrival by the principal of the school, Ms. Burgos and the program’s contact person, Mr. Pautrat, who had a list of the technical problems that needed to be resolved. The group consisted of eight students and two computing science faculty members who spent the day repairing and refurbishing desktop machines, configuring wireless networking on laptops, and troubleshooting printing problems.

The organization took part in the endeavor as a community service project to assist the school’s underfunded technology program. “We were thrilled to be able to help Julia de Burgos revamp their computer systems as it gives its students the opportunity to learn about and experience technology,” said Minh Tran, the event’s coordinator. Student volunteers were Kory Kirk, Minh Tran, John McCoe, Aj Palkovic, Casey Burkhardt, Joe Bruno, John Kim, and Victoria Tran. Faculty members Dr. Fleischman and Professor Nadi were also in attendance and provided valuable help throughout the day. The ACM plans on making return trips in the future to ensure everything remains up to date and in top functional condition.

AFTER THE JOB SEARCH, BEFORE THE MORTGAGE

Our students continue to find the job market to be excellent for computer science majors. This issue’s spotlight is on James Ballow (BS ’04), who writes:

After a paid internship as a junior web developer with SportingNews.com, I became a full-time front-end producer there. However, in May, 2007, rather than relocate to Charlotte, NC, I decided to search for a new job in the New York City area.

Soon after, I became a PHP developer at CSTV.com, where I worked primarily on special projects. About a year later, though, CSTV became part of CBS Sports. Once again I found myself in a new role, and once again I preferred to seek a new job in sports media.

I interviewed for two positions within ESPN and shortly thereafter received offers from both. I picked the one with ESPN Mobile and am now one of two lead developers for the mobile phone website. In the future I will potentially be working with both the iPhone and Google Android platforms. I also plan on utilizing ESPN’s mentoring program to help me plan out my career and assist me in my goal of receiving an MBA with a specialization in entertainment and media.
VILLANOVA GOES WEST TO PORTLAND

Computer Science educators, among them nine Villanova faculty and students, spent March 12-15 at the SIGCSE (Special Interest Group on Computer Science Education) Technical Symposium in Portland, Oregon. SIGCSE is the premier computer science education conference in the world, and Villanova always has an active presence.

Dr. Beck organized a booth in the exhibit hall that described CITIDEL and other collaborative projects between Villanova and Virginia Tech. Dr. Cassel led a special session on curriculum development activities of the ACM and was on a panel that explored future educational uses of Wikis. Dr. Fleischman presented the results of an innovative, international ethics course that linked students from Villanova and a university in Portugal. Dr. Joyce was a panelist for a lively discussion of the ins and outs of publishing for computer science educators. Dr. Way presented his popular workshop on using magic tricks to teach computer science.

Villanova students played key roles. For our booth, George Frank assisted at the event, while Kristin Raudonis helped with preparations at Villanova and Jyothirmai Patwari created the looping slide show. Melissa Corning, along with Dr. Papalaskari, presented a poster on computer science lessons from the successful Villanova Magic, Science and Theater summer camp program. Prof. Sue Metzger, who is also involved with the summer program, attended SIGCSE for the first time.

Although it rained more than it didn’t, all who attended enjoyed the Pacific Northwest and the very “green” city of Portland. All are looking ahead to 2009 when SIGCSE heads to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

UPE INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS

On January 26, 2007, Upsilon Pi Epsilon (UPE) inducted seven Computer Science students (three undergraduates and four graduates) into the national honor society in computing sciences.

Congratulations to Abdo Achkar, Patrick Cesarz, Christopher Continanza, Joseph Gmitter, Reeti Kumar, Adam Stepé and James Tate, who received the UPE award for their outstanding academic achievement and commitment to sciences.

On April 18, 2008, Upsilon Pi Epsilon (UPE) inducted ten Computer Science students (five undergraduates and five graduates) into the national honor society in computing sciences.

Congratulations to undergraduates Tara Srihari, AJ Palkovic, Kory Kirk, Mark Ballweg, and Kristin Scudder, and graduates Lauren Palcho, David Snyder, Nagesh Javali, Matthew White and Jacquelyn Grande, who will receive the UPE award for their outstanding academic achievement and commitment to sciences. The ceremony concluded with a small reception.

STUDENT ACM CHAPTER CO-SPONSORS A MIXER EVENT

By Casey Burkhardt

On Friday, February 1st, the Villanova Chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery in conjunction with the Department of Computing Sciences held its first annual mixer event. “We aimed to get underclassmen more involved in the department and have them meet some of their upperclassmen peers” said Minh Tran, the organization’s vice president. Attendees were greeted with pizza, snacks, and drinks. The highlight of the event was the Halo LAN Party. Over thirty computer science majors were in attendance and competed in the tournament. “We didn’t expect to have such a turnout! We needed to add a second lab as overflow for additional players” exclaimed freshman Casey Burkhardt, the event’s coordinator. Graduate student George Frank dominated the competition and was awarded a twenty-five dollar gift certificate to the Villanova University Bookstore. Because of the success of the mixer, the ACM plans on holding similar events in the near future.
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Collaboration is the name of the game. Faculty members are collaborating with students on a number of projects including designing courses that speak to “living in the knowledge society.”

Answering questions about the knowledge society is collaborative project between Villanova, Virginia Tech, Santa Clara University and North Carolina A&T. In fact, the several joint efforts between Villanova and Virginia Tech were presented as an exhibit at SIGCSE 2008. Both departments are being mindful of ways to broaden the participation of underrepresented groups in computing.

One of the senior research posters displayed in Mendel asks, “Where did the girls go?” Finding more women as computer science majors is a high priority. If we were successful, we would have enough students to work on all the current faculty research projects--virtual reality tours of churches, modeling of computer networks, nanocompilers, computational geometry for biological models, personalization of website interactions.

Have you followed the thread of ideas?

STUDENTS PRESENT SENIOR PROJECTS

On December 14, the students from the Senior Projects class presented their results in a three-hour session in Mendel Hall. Students, professors, parents, and other guests were treated to an interesting afternoon of video games, music and photo sharing, money and course management, virtual machines, and web information sharing approaches. The team projects were: Team Tyler - Photoglober - Tyler Cunnion; The WOW! team - Vatican Web Portal - Allison LeBlanc; Web Technology and Architectures - Christopher Bulsak; Line Runners - House Billing Management - Andrew Burke, Thomas Homsher, Alex Hanna; The Game Keepers - Video Games - Armin Mobasseri, Colin Shovlin, Kane Wu; MeRC - Villanova Scheduler - Melissa Corning, Reeti Kumar, Colleen McNerney. Congratulations to all of the students in the class and to Professor Helwig for a job well done. Projects may be viewed on the course website at:

http://www.csc.villanova.edu/~helwig/csc4790/f07/CSC4790Fall2007.html

NEWS BITS & BYTES

Kory Kirk received the Gestalt Innovative Scholarship from Accenture. This involves a $2000 dollar scholarship for the Fall 2008 semester and a paid summer internship lasting ten to fifteen weeks. Kory will be given a project and a mentor to guide him through the project.

Aj Palkovic has been accepted to the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship program at Cal Tech for this summer. He will work in Pasadena at Cal Tech’s Jet Propulsion Labs (JPL) with the JPL team that designed the ROAMS simulation package that is used to design and test the hardware and software of several high-profile NASA robot probes, including the Mars Rovers. His project will involve enhancing the statistical and experimental profiling capabilities of the package.

Colin Shovlin has taken a job as Quality Assurance Engineer for Fanbox, a company based in San Diego, which recently deployed www.fanbox.com in November. The site is a combination of a social network and an online operating system. He will be responsible for testing scalable, performance-driven solutions for high-throughput, database-driven web applications.
When you hear the term “silver bullet,” depending on your age and the day of the week, you probably think of either The Lone Ranger, methods for killing werewolves or Coors Light.

If you are Dr. Fred Brooks, who developed operating systems for IBM in the 1960s and founded the Computer Science program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you think of software engineering. Specifically, you think of new tricks for creating software faster and better.

Software engineers always look for the next great tool that can make their lives easier and solve their programming challenges. But Dr. Brooks says that’s not going to happen. In his famous article “No Silver Bullet” he argues there will never be a new technology or practice that doubles the productivity of computer programmers.

Brooks is well known for his truism, “Adding manpower to a late software project makes it later,” now called Brooks’ Law. We’ve seen this idea before. It’s all around us. Making something more complex invariably makes it worse. Just another way of saying, “Keep it Simple, Stupid!”

Remember the first time you tried to burn a YouTube video to a DVD so it could play in any DVD player? Our latest silver bullets of free software, DVD burning hardware and the Internet to the rescue! And the two most likely outcomes were (a) “It took me about 5 hours to burn the stupid 5 minute video!”, or (b) “I gave up after 10 hours!”

For many years, jokes about VCRs always had the punch line about them continually blinking “12:00” because nobody could figure out how to program them? They were just too complex. I’m happy to report that problem has been solved!

Brooks’ Law has been repealed by my automatic time-setting combination DVD/VCR. It has a hopelessly complex remote, but it retrieves the time via the cable TV system once a day, kindly adjusting itself for daylight savings time. Except that the box was made in 2005, so for a couple of weeks every Spring and Fall it has the wrong time. Automatically. Thanks to the change in when DST kicks in (or out). Hi-yo Silver. Away. Back to the drawing board.

So maybe Fred Brooks is right. Or maybe, like The Lone Ranger, we need to change our way of thinking about silver bullets. Like the Masked Man, what we need is to surround ourselves with good people. Maybe that’s the real silver bullet. Right, Tonto?